

## EDITORIAL

**TRANSFORMATION** is a new South African journal intended to serve as a forum for analysis and debate about this society and the surrounding region.

Change seems to be definitely on the South African agenda. "Reform" is the catchphrase of the day. Its material content will have major political and economic implications for our lives. Whether it will be fundamental, and how far-reaching it will be, is the concern of all those involved in this country.

Attention is intensely focused on the daily rush of events as the balance of forces and the nature of consciousness shifts. However, without clear analyses of objectives and forces impeding or facilitating advances, such struggle is in danger of becoming "all movement and no direction". There is, therefore, a fundamental need to situate these day to day movements and the emerging broader patterns into a current and historical framework for analysis and criticism. History, more than ever, has its own particular pertinence for all struggles to create a new future.

Contemporary conditions in South Africa are altering rapidly. The balance of class forces that has shaped this society's past is undergoing a fundamental restructuring. New class initiatives are apparent with every twist and turn of struggle. Fresh contradictions and struggles for different alliances pervade all the social forces on the historical stage. As part of this process capital is reorganising its agenda in order to bring about political restabilisation and a renewed basis for sustained accumulation. There is a new terrain of state reaction, intervention and ideological experimentation.

One striking aspect of the new terrain of mass politics is the openly expressed interest in socialist ideas and practices. The two catchphrases in this new mass politics are 'socialism' and 'democracy'. Sometimes they are counterposed as a political choice between 'workerists' and 'populists'; sometimes they are fused as a struggle for 'democratic socialism'. Yet the whole question of what these concepts mean has not been seriously broached. Sectarianism, dogmatism, and violent resolution of differences of opinion too often characterise political

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discussions. **TRANSFORMATION** will examine these issues in a spirit which is intended to spur debate and encourage the exposition of different considered positions but without any partisanship other than the conviction that there is no settled and established doctrine on the subject.

We are aiming to provide a suitable outlet for such thinking. We hope thereby to seize this opportunity to sharpen our understanding of the forces that continue to shape this society and to understand the potential for its transformation.

**TRANSFORMATION** intends particularly to consider, both historically and currently, the class nature of South African society; political, cultural and ideological domination in all its ramifications; the constitution of the state and its potential for reform; the process of capital accumulation and the economic consequences of crisis; and the political options available to the different classes.

The material in our first issue reflects the new terrain of politics. All contributors grapple, although from different methods and perspectives, with the problem of moving on from the era of the 1950s, the last period where the questions of transformation were openly raised in South Africa.

Hudson addresses the status of the Freedom Charter and the concepts closely associated with it, particularly 'internal colonialism'. Without discarding the Charter as an important political document he outlines the historical basis of the concepts that are usually used to underpin it, most importantly that of 'national democracy' and subjects them to criticism. In so doing he raises, without developing, the issue of the Freedom Charter's relationship to a socialist project.

Who can doubt that one of the most important issues facing all forces in this society is the 'national question'? Alexander's concern with this question is well known, and in this text he tackles the issue through a detailed critique of other authors on the subject. Whether his resolution of the national question is convincing is of course a matter for further debate.

Freund's challenging piece is intended to raise debate. He takes issue with a number of the dominant ideological conceptions infusing popular politics in this country. His main thrust is that much of the 'orthodox' theory that has dominated

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the popular movement is out of touch with the new terrain of mass politics and the possibilities for socialism and democracy in South Africa.

Sisulu's keynote address to the National Education Crisis Committee conference in Durban in March of this year was an important conceptual and strategic intervention. The conference was marked by a decision to recommend the return to school by black scholars. This decision has come to be regarded as a strategic shift in mass politics for the return to school was clearly not a surrender to the state but seen as part of a broader strategy for change. Sisulu's address raised many of the strategic issues and will most certainly generate a serious debate around its central concept - the struggle for 'peoples power'.

Our other material is concerned with attempts to assess changes in South African political economy. Nzimande considers the situation and consciousness of black 'personnel practitioners' who occupy an important, if ambiguous, site within the new black petty bourgeoisie - a class which seems certain to become more and more significant as social change accelerates. McCarthy briefly reviews the considerable body of policy literature that links big capital to the state as they move towards the unfolding strategies of 'orderly urbanisation' and greater 'reform'. Finally in a critical review of a recent book on Anglo American, Moll raises a number of crucial issues concerning socialism and monopoly capitalism.

\*As was expected by everybody, except of course the editors, our promises to bring out the journal early this year were hopelessly optimistic. Having learnt from the problems we encountered we wish to reassure our subscribers that we are still optimistic. However in order to atone to those who waited so long we have produced a bumper first issue.

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### CONTRIBUTORS:

**Peter Hudson** lectures in Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand.

**Bonginkosi Nzimande** lectures in industrial psychology at the University of Zululand, Umlazi campus. He is engaged in MA research on the subject of his article.

**Neville Alexander** is the director of the SA Committee for Higher Education in Cape Town. His latest book, *Sow the Wind*, appeared in 1985.

**Zwelakhe Sisulu** is the editor of *New Nation*. He was president of the Media Workers Association of SA.

**Bill Freund** is Professor of Economic History at the University of Natal, Durban. His latest book is *The Making of Contemporary Africa*.

**Jeff McCarthy** lectures in Geography at the University of Natal, Durban. He is co-author, with Dan Smit, of *The South African City*.

**Terence Moll** is a researcher at the SA Labour and Development Research Unit at the University of Cape Town. He has studied economics at UCT and Cambridge.

**Cliff Bestall** designed the cover.